

TV review

'JFK: Reckless Youth'

By Miles Beller

A president radiating an aura of movie-star sexiness and rock-singer magnetism, John F. Kennedy yet reigns as supreme icon, the martyred politician whose death ended a "vigorous" age when youth and physical stamina were chief virtues.

And with ABC's "JFK: Reckless Youth," based on the first volume of Nigel Hamilton's planned three-volume work chronicling Kennedy's life, JFK's formative years are extruded through the screenwri-

ter's template and turned into an exaggerated miniseries.

In this regard we get JFK as a bold but sickly small boy, quickly advanced to his young manhood, a role played fully and at times convincingly by Patrick Dempsey, showing us an energetic Boston Brahmin who lives impetuously, without regard to consequence. Yet what does defeat "Reckless Youth" is inartful screenwriting, scripting running from silly to stilted.

In its maladroitness manner, "Reck-

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'Reckless'

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less Youth" shuttles through Kennedy's early years, catching him as boy-man out for a good time and adventure. So we bear witness to his school escapades and dalliances with the ladies, in particular a heated romance with journalist Inga Arvad (Yolanda Jilot).

We meet those in the Kennedy brood, including fair-haired brother Joe Jr. (Loren Dean), patriarch Joe (Terry Kinney) and matriarch Rose (Diana Scarwid).

History as docudrama bravado, biography as one hokey defining "moment" after another linked by edits and cuts self-consciously clicking across the small-screen, "JFK: Reckless Youth" is best tak-

JFK: RECKLESS YOUTH ABC

The Polone Co.

in association with Hearst Entertainment

Executive producer.....Judith A. Polone
Co-producer.....Dennis Stuart Murphy
Producer.....Harry Winer
Director.....Harry Winer
Based on the book by.....Nigel Hamilton
Teleplay.....William Broyles
Music.....Cameron Allan
Production designer.....Armin Ganz
Editor.....David Simmons, John A. Barton
Director of photography.....Jean Lepine
Cast: Patrick Dempsey, Terry Kinney, Loren Dean,
Yolanda Jilot, Diana Scarwid, Robin Tunney, Andrew
Lowrey, Stan Cahill, Claire Forlani, Malachy
McCort, James Rebhorn

Airdates: Sunday, Nov. 21, 9-11 p.m. (Part I);
Tuesday, Nov. 23, 9-11 p.m. (Part II)

en as dubious video interpretation of a life. For screenwriter William Broyles renders portraiture as sloppy miniature, packing all the emotional involvement of a crudely fashioned paint-by-numbers scene. □